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NEW BULLETIN TELLS OF LIFE AND HABITS OF POCKET GOPHERS

"Habits and Economic Status of the Pocket Gophers" is the title of a new ~~technical~~ bulletin just issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The author, Theo. H. Scheffer, is an associate biologist of the Bureau of Biological Survey stationed at Puyallup, Wash., and has had many years experience making scientific observations of pocket gophers and other rodents, especially in their relation to agriculture.

"The extent to which pocket gophers affect the interests of agriculture is becoming more apparent each year," says the new bulletin. "Scarcely any group of native rodents is more widely distributed in the United States, and certainly none has shown more readiness to adapt itself to the changed conditions introduced into its habitat by the farmer. The growing of such crops as alfalfa and clover has made life easy for the pocket gopher, since these plants furnish an abundant food supply in their roots and are usually maintained on the same ground for a period of years. Reclamation of desert lands also has furnished new food supplies and harbor for these rodents and has assisted their local wanderings." Such changes have favored the pocket gopher's rapid increase in many agricultural sections until, according to the bulletin, it has become one of the most destructive mammal

pests of the country.

The bulletin discusses the appearance and general habits of pocket gophers, their disposition and senses, the sounds they make, the burrows they dig and the mounds they pile up, their active seasons, and their breeding habits. Sections also are devoted to the food of these rodents, their natural enemies, and their damage to agricultural crops, including alfalfa and clover, natural grasses, root crops, horticultural crops, irrigated crops, and pasture and range forage.

As for the control of the pocket gopher, the bulletin suggests that this is not extremely difficult but requires persistence and cooperative effort. Details of control methods are not discussed, but it is stated that the methods tested and variously employed include fumigation of the burrows of the pocket gopher, trapping with specially designed traps, shooting, and poisoning, all either individually on single premises or in general campaigns of community cooperation.

Copies of the new publication, Technical Bulletin 224-T, may be obtained at 10 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

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